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SUBJECT: STIFF JAIL PENALTY FOR MAID-ABUSING KUWAITI

¶1. (U) In a landmark December 10 ruling, a criminal court sentenced a Kuwaiti employer in absentia to 16 years in jail for sexually and physically abusing a Filipina maid in his employ and issued a warrant for his arrest; the employer absconded and as of December 12 had not been apprehended, according to local press reports. The Philippines Embassy labor attache Omar Garangan told PolOff that, to his knowledge, this was the most severe sentence ever given to a Kuwaiti for mistreatment of a Filipina worker. The Philippines Embassy had filed charges on behalf of the woman in March after she had been hospitalized for a head wound requiring 24 stitches. In her sworn statement, she claimed that her employer sexually assaulted her and threatened to kill her if she refused his advances, according to the Philippines Embassy.

¶2. (SBU) Comment: In the past year, the GOK charged twelve Kuwaiti citizens and a larger number of expats with domestic labor abuse. However, the December 10 sentence of 16 years is unusually stiff. By comparison, a Kuwaiti citizen charged with murder for beating his maid to death in July was sentenced to ten years. The tough sentence in this case sends a strong and welcome anti-TIP message: Kuwaiti nationals should no longer consider themselves above the law when it comes to mistreatment of domestic workers.

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JONES